

# CHARITY

# Digital Skills

# Report 2019





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# INTRODUCTION

The Charity Digital Skills Report is the definitive survey of the digital skills landscape across the third sector. Now in its third year, the report provides an annual barometer of the state of digital skills within the charity sector.

Following the success of the report in 2017 and 2018, the Skills Platform, in partnership with Zoe Amar Digital, set about 'taking the temperature' of the charity sector and, more specifically, about how it's using digital. The aim was to use the intelligence gathered to map digital skills across the charity sector and to develop a shared understanding of how digital can help charities to achieve their missions.

As the sector evolves and new challenges and opportunities come our way (not to mention Brexit) we've endeavoured to weave these, and other topical themes, into the report to ensure we're staying ahead of the curve and also providing relevant and useful insights. So you'll notice that we've changed up some of the questions for the 2019 report to tackle this.

***"With knowledge comes power, and with power comes great responsibility"***  
and our single hope is that the insights contained within this report help to drive the charity sector forward.

We hope you'll find this overview of charity digital useful and inspiring.

**Happy reading!**



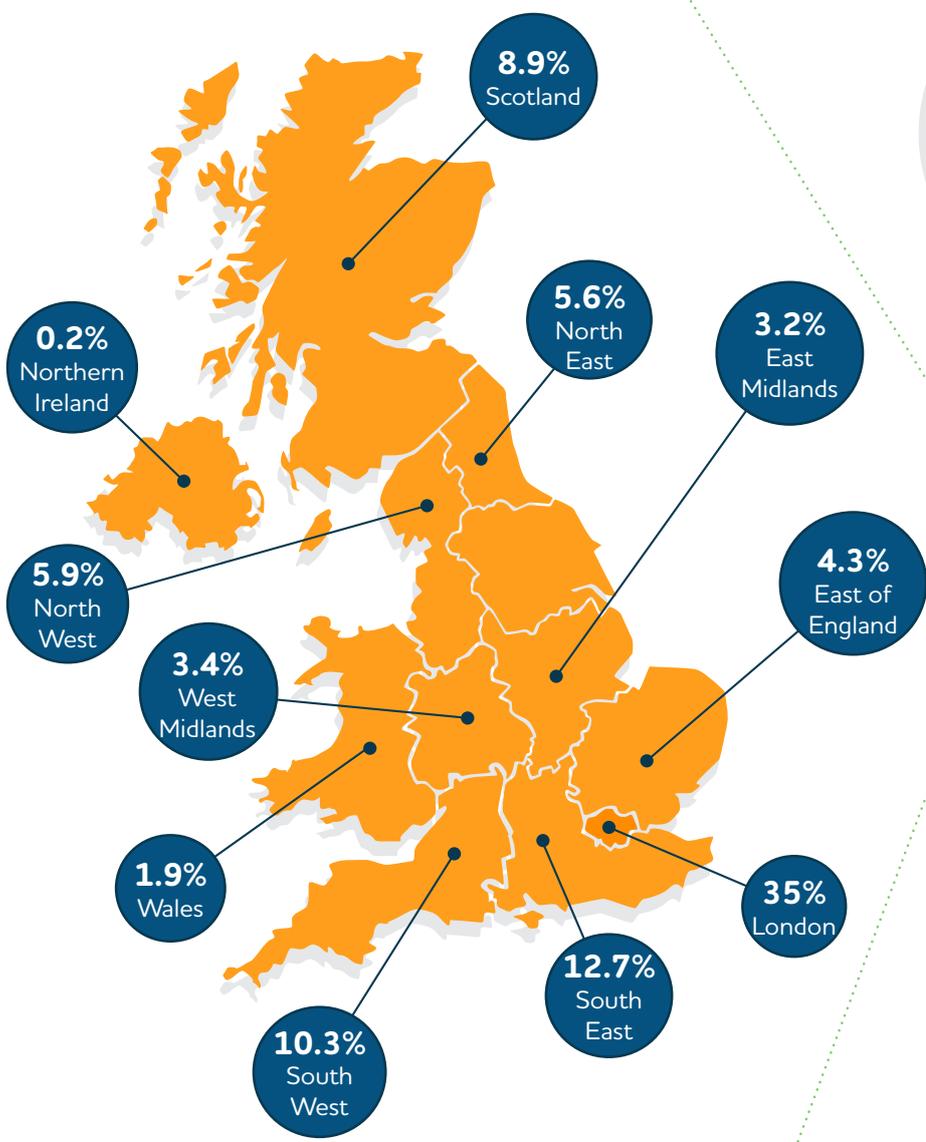
**ZOE AMAR**  
Founder  
Zoe Amar Digital



**LAURA CLOUGH**  
Product Marketing Manager  
Skills Platform



# SURVEY OVERVIEW



## ROLE

### TOP 5 BY REPRESENTATION



## CHARITY INCOME



# D1

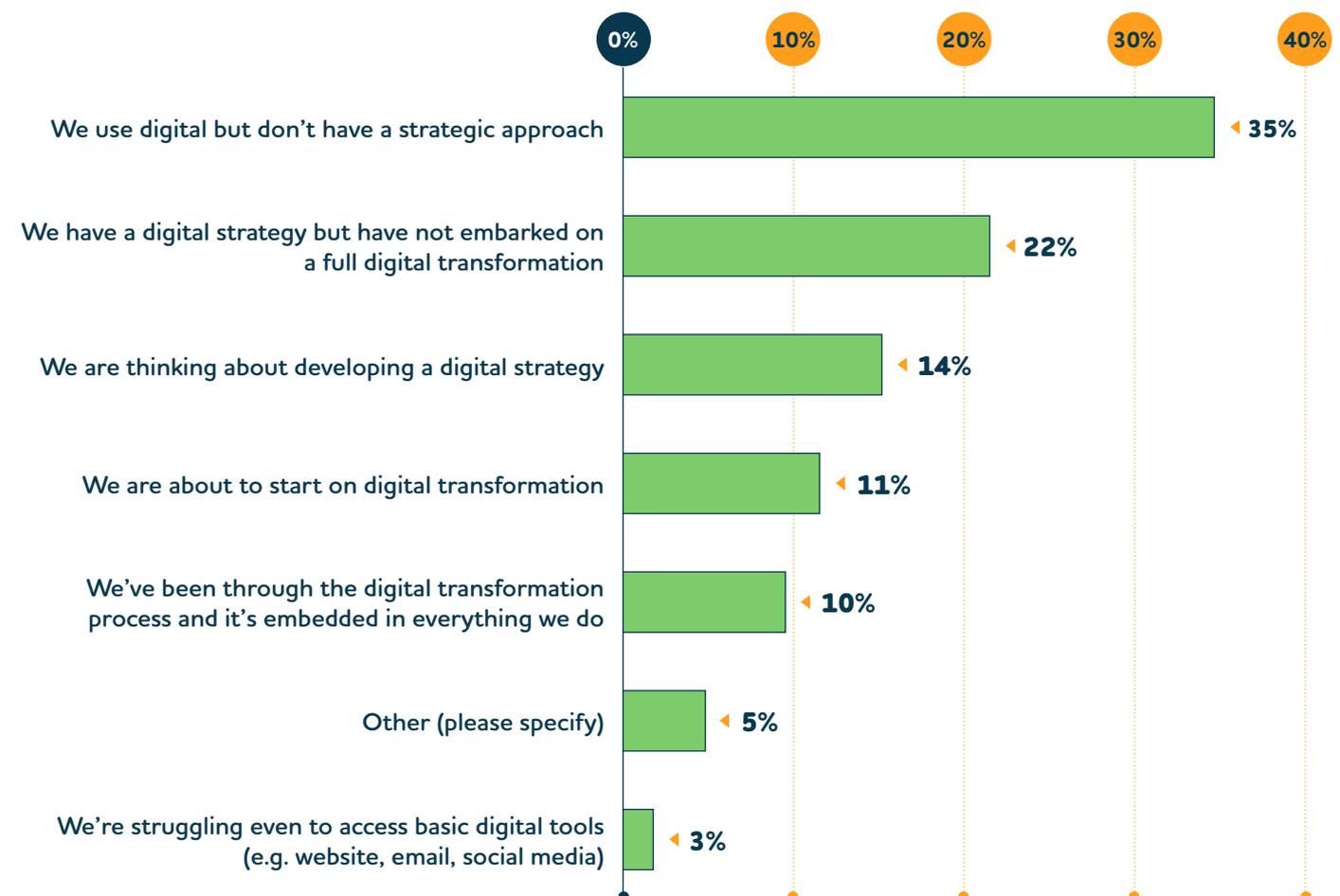
## Digital Trends



# WHAT STAGE IS YOUR CHARITY AT WITH DIGITAL?

More than half of charities (52%) don't have a digital strategy, an increase from the last 2 years. 10% have been through the full digital transformation process and embedded it, 5% less than in 2018.

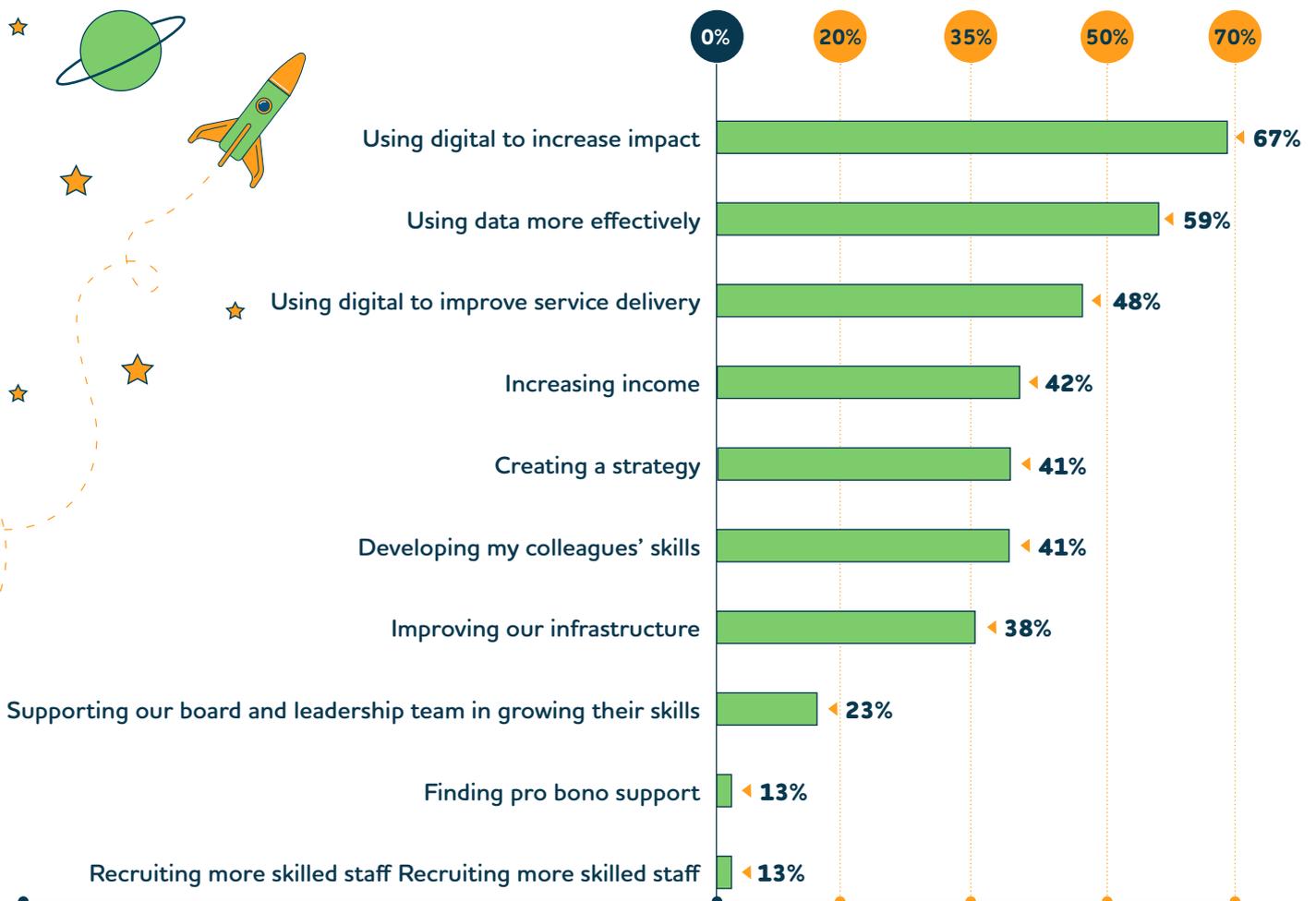
- More than a third (35%) of charities are using digital but don't have a strategic approach, compared to 31% last year. This number has reverted back to 2017 levels.
- 14% of charities are thinking about developing a digital strategy, whilst 3% who are struggling to access basic digital tools. This indicates that 52% of charities do not have a digital strategy, an increase on last year's figure of 45% and 50% in 2017.
- Less charities are moving forward with digital. Last year 15% of charities had been through the digital transformation process and embedded it, compared to 10% this year and 9% in 2017. However, 11% are about to start on digital transformation, compared to 10% in 2018.
- 22% have a digital strategy but have not yet embarked on digital transformation, holding steady with findings in 2017-2018.
- 3% of charities are still struggling to access basic tools such as a website, email and social media, up from 2% last year.



# WHAT DO YOU SEE AS YOUR CHARITY'S DIGITAL PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?

More than two thirds of charities want to use digital to increase their impact, whilst 59% want to make more effective use of data and 48% wish to use it to improve service delivery.

- 67% want to use it to **increase their impact**, whilst 59% want to **use data more effectively**.
- Almost half (48%) want to use digital to **improve service delivery**.
- 42% would like to deploy digital to **increase income**.
- 41% want to **create a strategy**, which may mean that more charities will have a strategy in time for next year's report.
- Charities want to improve skills, with 41% **prioritising development of their colleagues' skills** and 23% **keen to support their board and leadership team** in developing theirs.
- Some charities would like more resources, with 38% **wishing to improve their charity's infrastructure**. However, only 13% are looking for **pro bono support** and planning to **recruit more skilled staff**.



# WHICH OF THESE BUILDING BLOCKS OF DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION DO YOU HAVE IN PLACE?

53% of charities are responding to changing user needs and behaviours. Yet just 35% are up to speed with how digital trends are affecting their charity's work and have a plan in place for how to tackle this. Meanwhile less than a quarter (23%) have a clear strategy for how digital can help achieve their charity's goals, indicating that the majority of charities have not aligned their digital and organisational strategies.

- **56% of charities** are taking **active steps to improve the culture so digital can flourish**, down from 62% in 2018 and 59% in 2017.
- It's positive to see that **53% are responding to changing user needs and behaviours**, a building block which we're asking about for the first time this year.
- It is a concern that **just 35% are up to speed with how digital trends are affecting their charity's work and have a plan in place for how to tackle this**. This is down 10% from 2018 and falls lower than the 2017 rating (39%).
- **Just over a third (34%) feel that digital transformation is being led from the top**. This is slightly less than last year (36%) but more than 2017 (29%).
- Less than a quarter (**23%**) **have a clear strategy for how digital can help achieve their charity's goals**, dropping from 32% last year and 27% in 2017. This shows that, worryingly, the vast majority of charities are still not aligning their digital and corporate strategies.
- Only **9% of charities** say that **everyone in their charity understands their digital vision**, which has stayed at the same level since the report began.
- **26% of charities** feel that they **are good at innovating and product service development**, down from 29% last year.

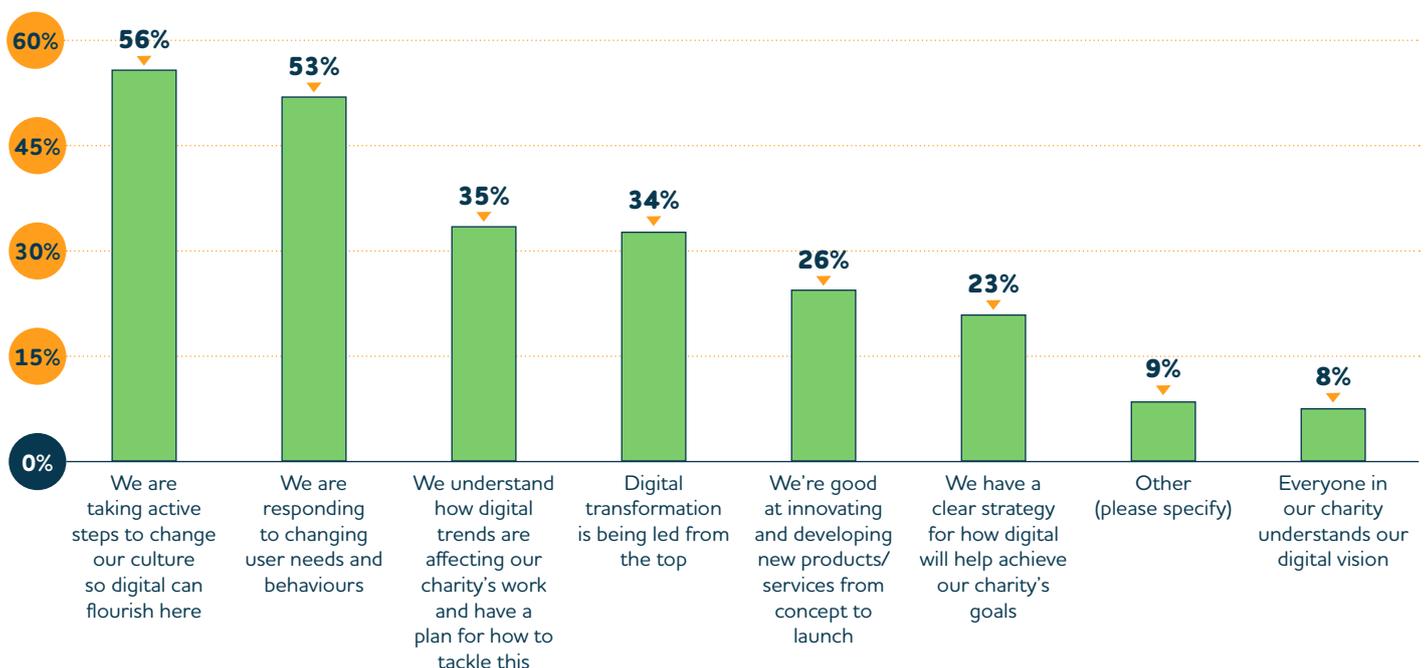
## Comments

*"None of the above, we don't even have good broadband or mobile phone coverage in our area."*

*"Senior management are holding us back from embedding digital."*

*"We are just starting on our journey of digital discovery ... but it's just me and a colleague out of 60 ... lots to do."*

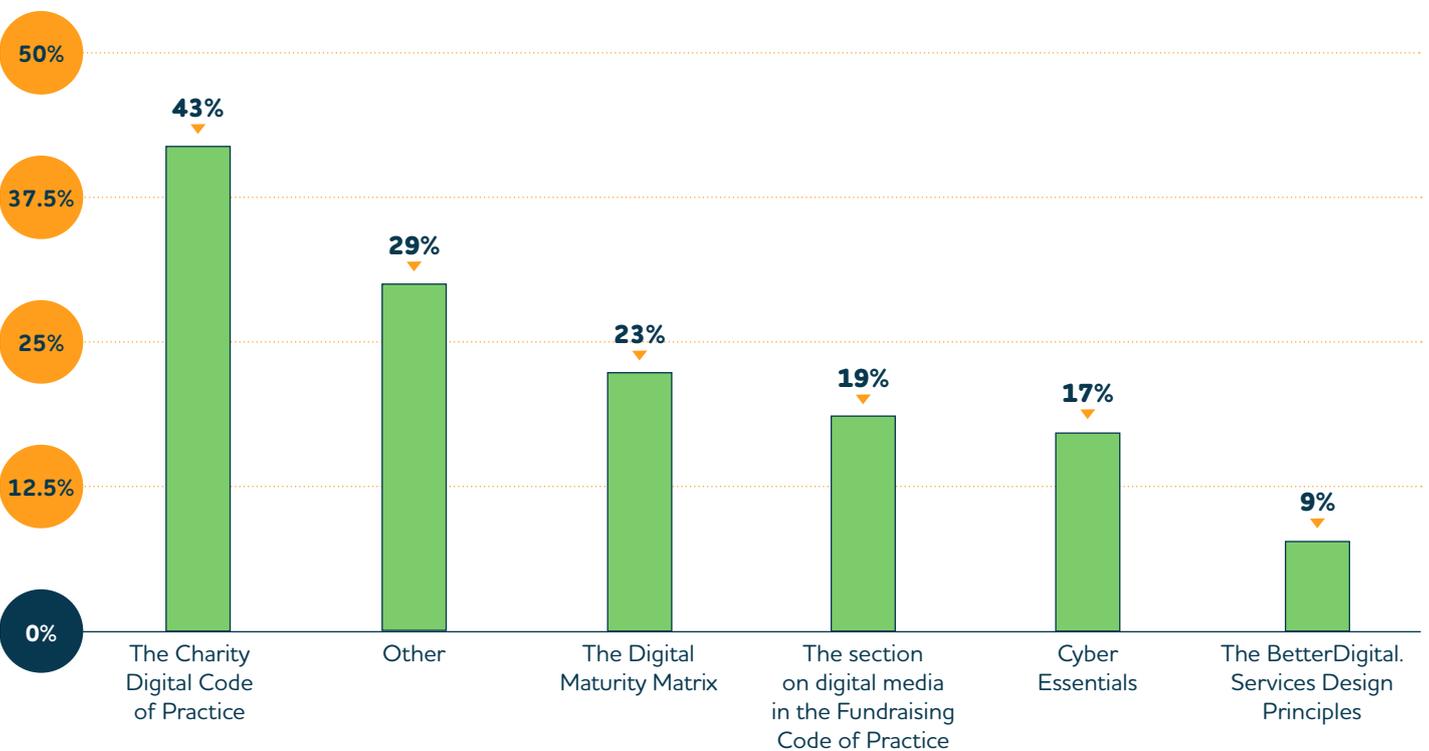
*"We have a cohort of digital leaders who want us to transform. The will is there!"*



# WHICH OF THESE DIGITAL TOOLS OR FRAMEWORKS ARE YOU USING?

43% are using The Charity Digital Code of Practice, with 23% using The Digital Maturity Matrix.

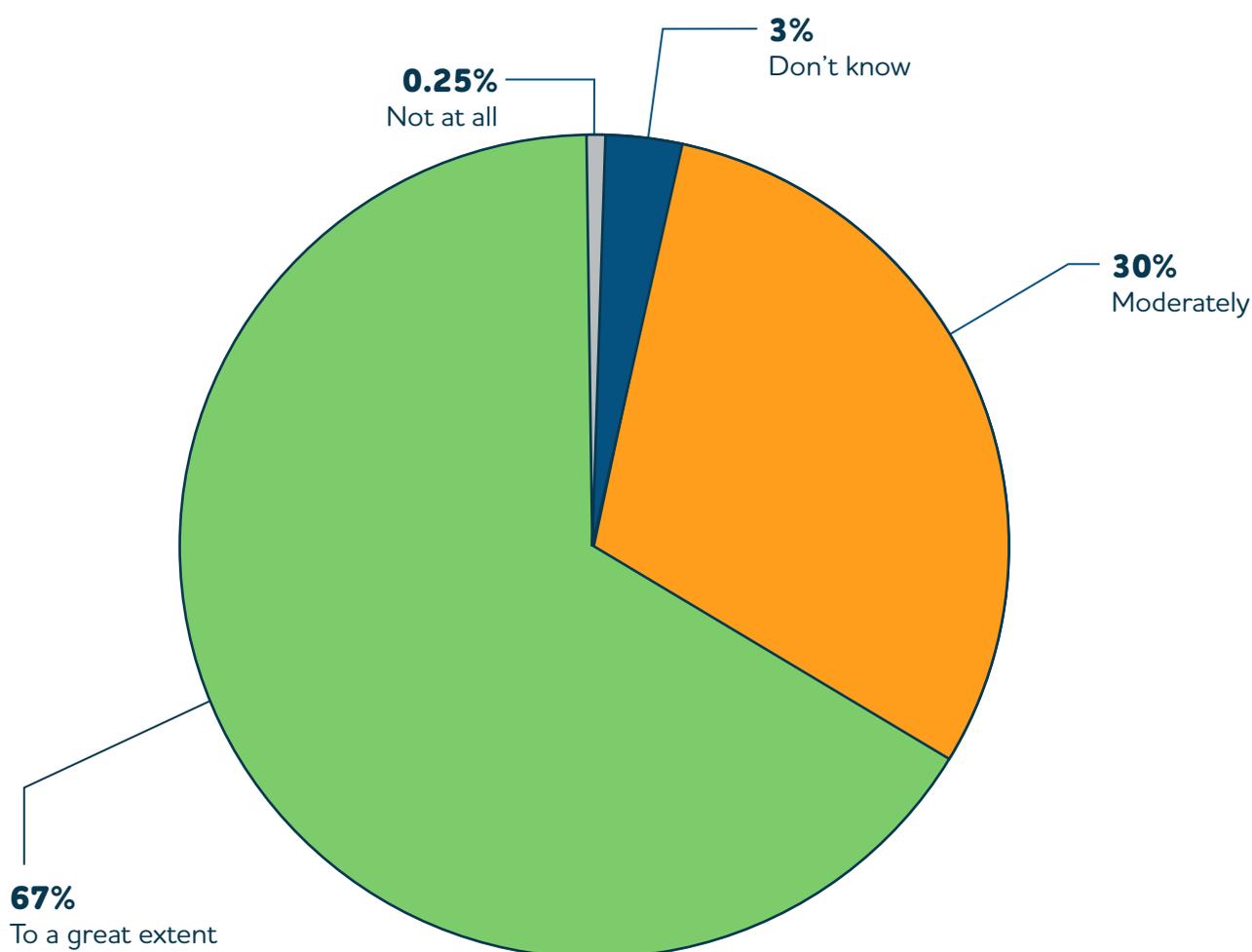
- 43% are using **The Charity Digital Code of Practice**.
- 23% are using **The Digital Maturity Matrix**, whilst 19% are using the **section on digital media in the Fundraising Code of Practice** and 17% are using **Cyber Essentials**.
- 9% are using **The BetterDigital.Services Design Principles**.



# IMAGINE THE CHARITY SECTOR 10 YEARS FROM NOW. AS DIGITAL ADOPTION PROGRESSES, TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THE SECTOR WILL HAVE CHANGED?

Charities told us once again that the sector will be very different in 2029, with 67% holding that view.

- **67% think that the sector will change as digital adoption grows.** This is slightly less than 69% last year and 68% in 2017.
- As last year, **less than 1% think that it won't change**, whilst 3% don't know.
- **30% think the sector will change moderately**, compared to 28% last year.



# WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO YOUR CHARITY GETTING THE MOST FROM DIGITAL?

Similar challenges are facing charities as they try to progress in digital. Lack of funding is still the greatest issue at 56% this year, with skills just behind it at 53%. Culture continues to be a barrier at 45%. And just under a third say that a lack of trustee buy-in is preventing their charity from moving forward.

- **Funding** continues to be **the biggest challenge for charities with digital**, at 56% compared to 58% last year.
- **Skills** remain as **the second greatest issue**, with **53% of charities rating them as a barrier** (up from 51% last year).
- **Culture** remains as **the third largest obstacle**, with **45% of charities** stating that **it must change** (down from 46% last year).
- There is a **continued improvement** in the number of **charities seeing digital as a priority**. 41% have other challenges that are seen as more important than digital, down from 45% in 2018 and 50% in 2017. This suggests that digital could be rising up charities' agendas.
- **Infrastructure and processes** (e.g. data protection) are **less of a challenge**. From 2017-2018, 45% of respondents said this needed to be improved, but only 36% this year feel the same.
- **33%** believe that **their charities lack confidence with digital**, up from 27% last year.
- **31%** see a **lack of trustee understanding or buy-in for digital as a blocker**, slightly less than the 33% last year.
- **29%** are worried that **they are not agile enough** (down from 32% last year).
- Similar to last year, **27%** of charities **are concerned about the impact** that a **lack of leadership** in their charities is **having on digital progress** (28% in 2018).
- **25%** of charities know that **they are now competing with digitally savvy organisations** including those who are not just charities, as in 2018.
- **Internal politics is a bigger issue this year** at 23%, rising from 20% last year.
- **22%** aren't **aware how their audience is using digital**, an improvement on 24% last year.
- **20%** would like **HR to be involved** (down from 24% last year).
- **Slightly more charities** than last year **don't know where they need to go or how to get there** (19% compared to 17% in 2018).

## Comments

*"A lack of resources – predominantly staff time."*

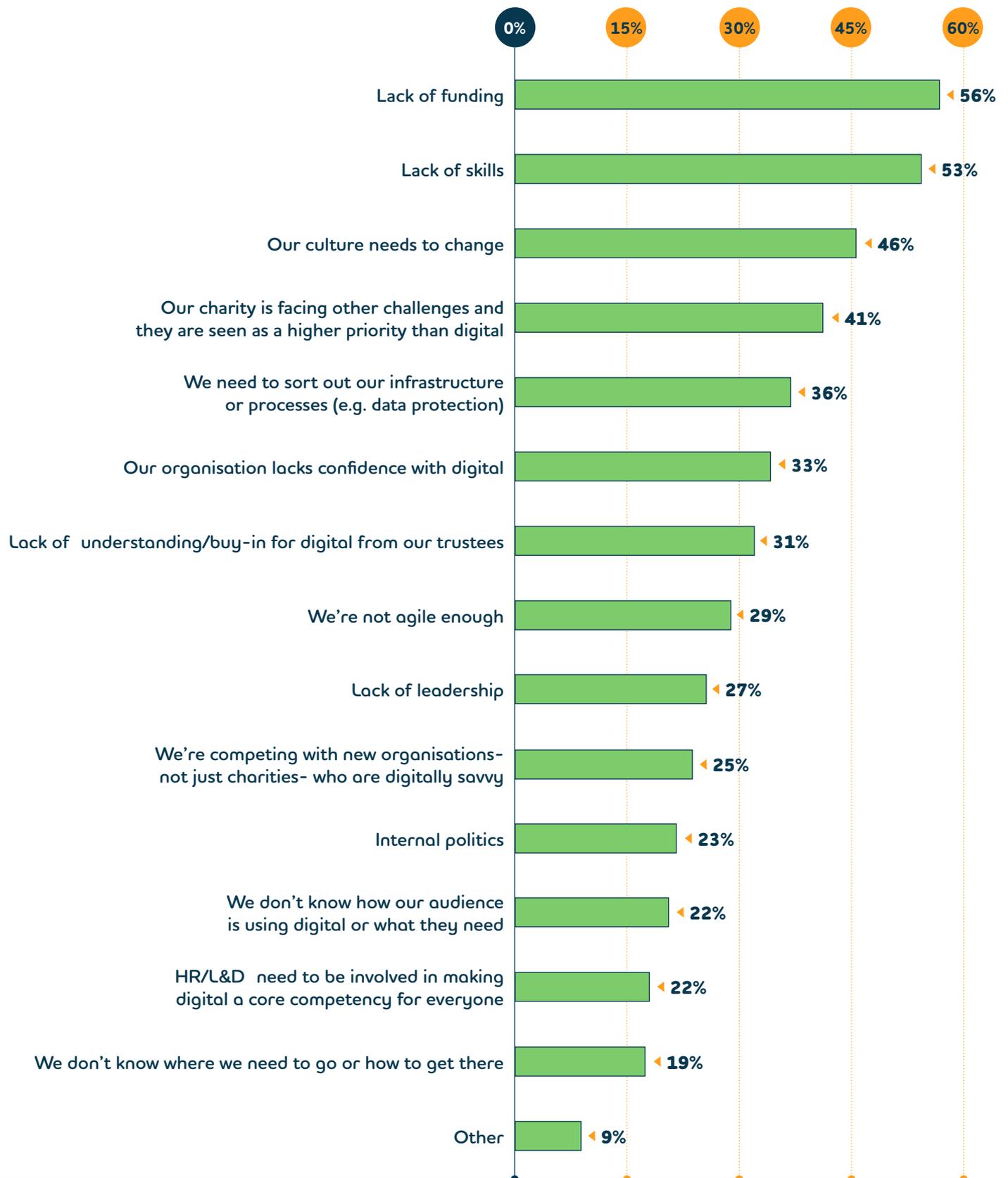
*"Lack of funding not for products/ services specifically but because we can't quite afford the equivalent of a FTE for the whole organisation so any strategy or implementation gets slowed down by the other demands."*

*"Competition for limited resources against buildings for example."*

*"Capacity/underfunding – resources pared back to the bone because of low funding to meet beneficiaries' needs."*

*"Lack of diversity of thought at a Board level."*

# WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BARRIERS TO YOUR CHARITY GETTING THE MOST FROM DIGITAL?



# HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHARITY'S SKILLS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?

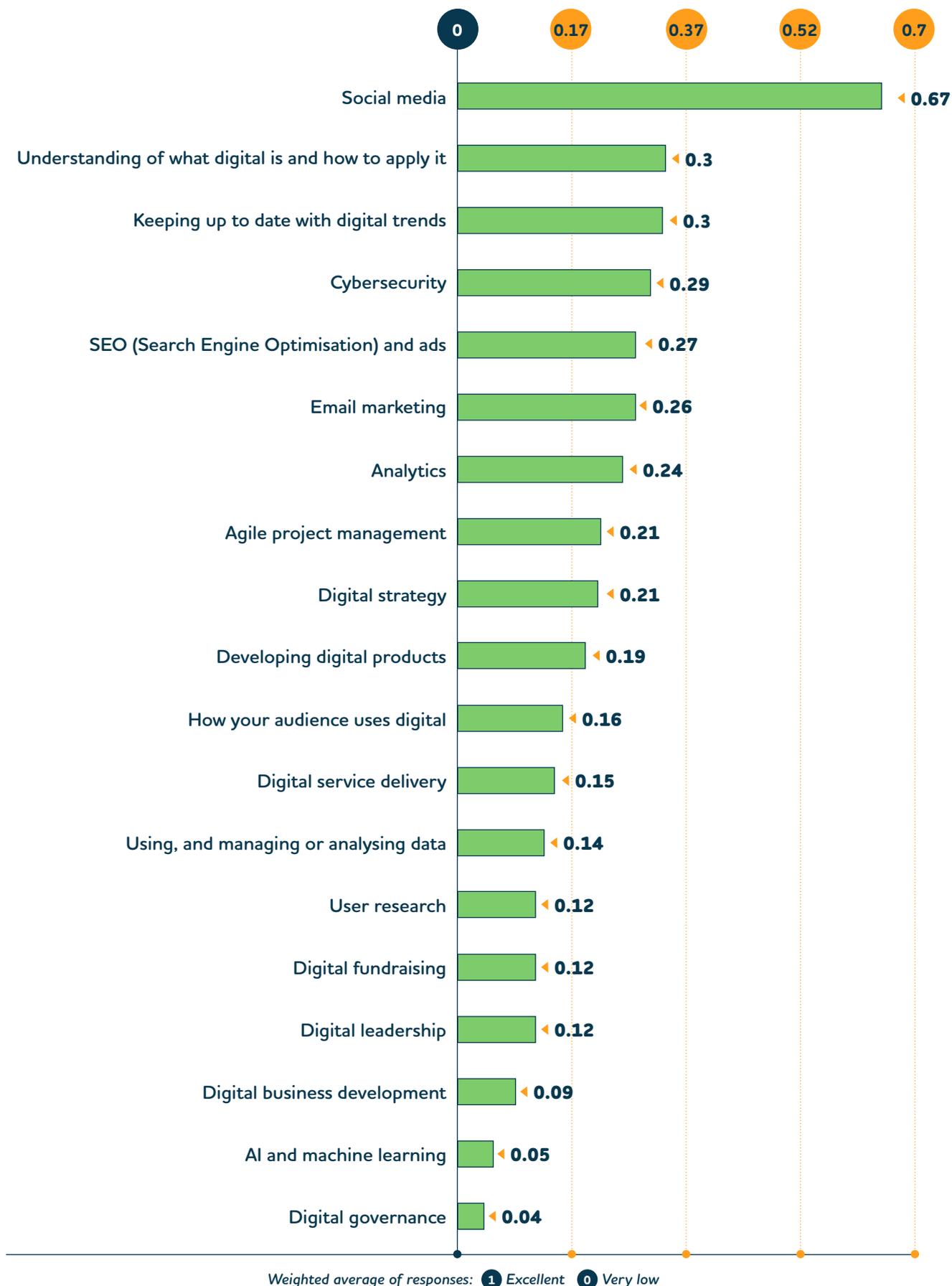
Continuing the pattern we've seen year on year, many answers were clustered around the fair to low end of the spectrum. This means that there is substantial room for improvement in charities' digital skills, as well as the confidence they have in them.

There have been some improvements in digital fundraising and cybersecurity skills, but gaps remain in digital strategy, artificial intelligence, service delivery and product development.

More charities are worried about their digital governance and leadership skills than last year.

- **43%** rate their **understanding of what digital is** and how to apply it as **excellent or good**, down from 49% in 2017. **52%** rate themselves as **fair or low**, up from 50% last year.
- **More than half (59%)** state that their **digital strategy skills are fair to low**, up from 53% last year.
- **59%** rate themselves as **fair or low at keeping up to date with digital trends**, up from 55% in 2018.
- **Almost two thirds (64%)** say that they have **good to fair skills in how their audience uses digital**, the same rating as in 2018.
- **76% of charity professionals have low to very low skills in AI**, rising from 73% last year and 68% in 2017. This is a concern as, according to [a recent report by PWC](#), artificial intelligence is predicted to add £232 billion to the UK economy by 2030. Charities who are not looking to develop skills in this area could miss out on opportunities.
- **Handling data continues to be a skills gap.** As in 2018, **62%** rate themselves as **fair to low with using, managing and analysing data**. **65%** rate themselves as **good to fair with cybersecurity**, a small improvement on 63% in 2018.
- Charities' confidence with digital channels is varied. **62% have good to fair email marketing skills** (the same as last year), and **60% think they are excellent or good at social media** (down from 64% last year). **59% are good to fair with analytics**, down from 66% in 2018. **58% say they have fair to low skills in SEO and ads**, up from 56% last year.
- **59% rate their digital fundraising skills as fair to low**, a small improvement on 62% last year. **63% rate their business development skills as fair to low**, an increase on 58% in 2018. Both skills are critical to help charities generate more income.
- **60%** told us that their **digital service delivery skills are fair to low**, an increase on 53% last year. Charities are finding other relevant areas challenging; **59%** rate their **user research skills as fair to low** (similar to last year's results), **54%** saying that they have **low to very low digital product development skills** (up from 51% last year) and **77%** rating their agile project management skills as fair to very low (up from 75% in 2018).
- **60%** rate their **digital governance skills as fair to low**, up from 58% last year. **58%** say that their charities have **fair to low skills in digital leadership**, a notable increase from 53% last year.

# HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR CHARITY'S SKILLS IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS?



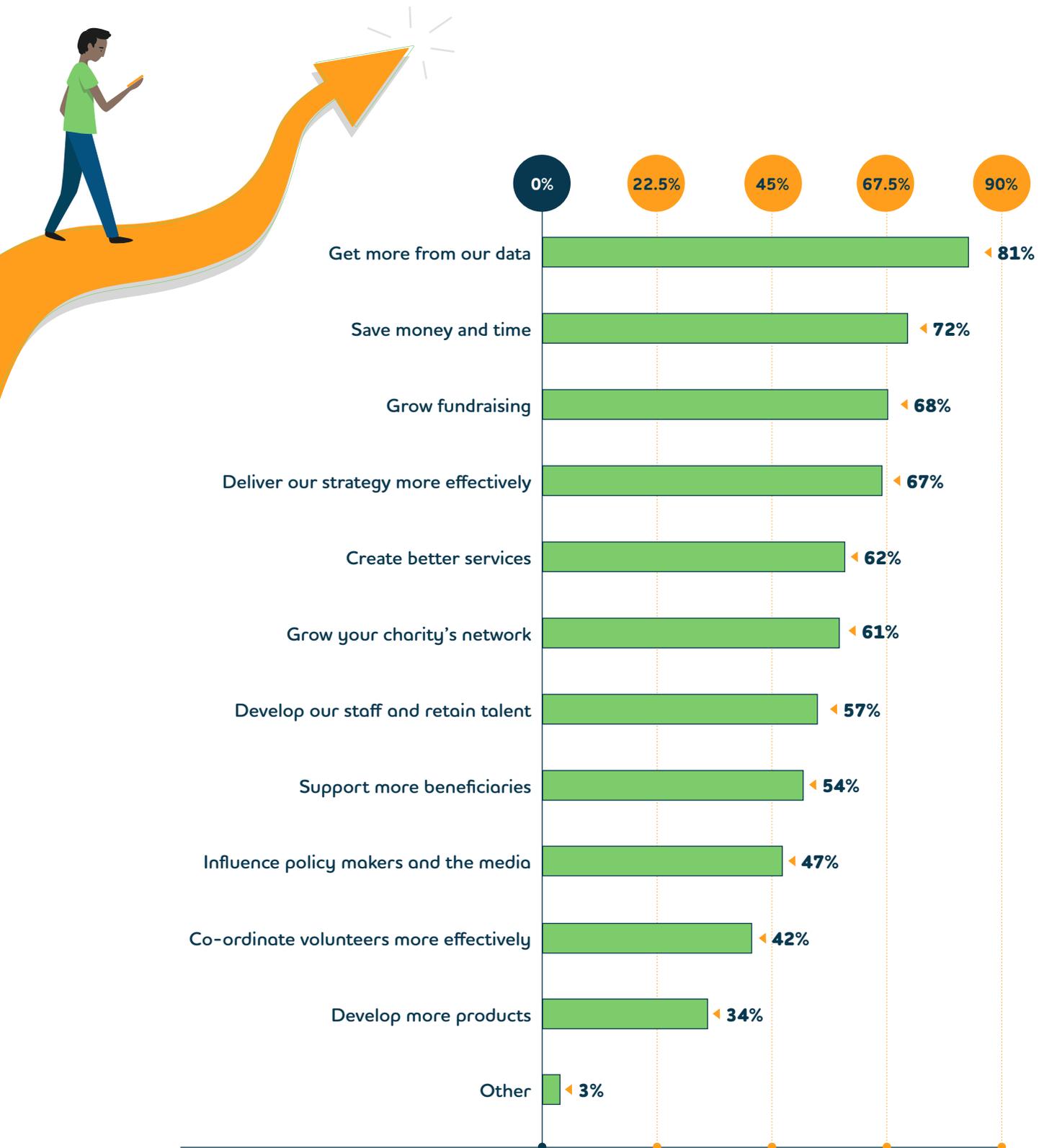
# WHAT COULD YOUR CHARITY DO IF IT INCREASED ITS DIGITAL SKILLS?

**81% want to get more from their data, whilst 72% think that investing in skills would help them save money and time.**

- Charities are thinking big about what digital skills could help them do. **81% are keen to get more from their data**, whilst **72% think it would help them save money and time**.
- **68%** believe it would **increase fundraising** (72% last year).
- **67%** believe it would **help them deliver their strategy more effectively**, less than the 72% last year.
- As in 2018, **62%** thought that digital skills could **help them develop better services**.
- However, only **61%** thought digital skills could **help them grow their charity's network**, down from 73% last year.
- **Increasing staff's skills and retaining talent** has become **less of a priority** when developing skills. Only **57%** think that this is the case, compared to 65% in 2018, and back to the same level as in 2017.
- **54%** thought that digital would help them **support more beneficiaries** (compared to 57% last year). Yet only **42%** feel that growing digital skills could help them **co-ordinate volunteers more effectively**, falling sharply from 54% in 2018. **Less than half (47%)** think that digital could help **grow their influence with policy makers and the media**, down from 53% in 2018. The fact that charities have fallen back in these three areas suggests that they need more support when using digital to increase their social impact.
- **Just over a third (34%)** believe that developing their skills would help them **develop more products**.



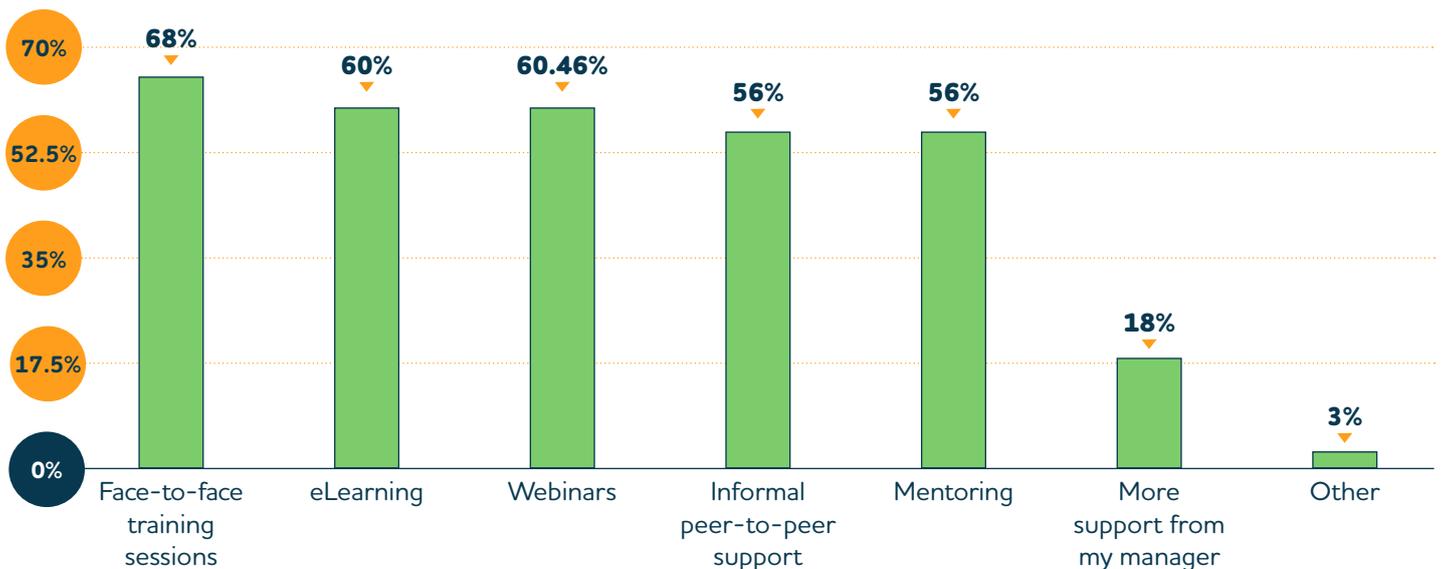
# WHAT COULD YOUR CHARITY DO IF IT INCREASED ITS DIGITAL SKILLS?



# HOW WOULD YOU PREFER TO LEARN ABOUT DIGITAL?

Face-to-face training is still the most popular option, but elearning and webinars are gaining ground.

- **Face-to-face training** was the preferred option of many charity professionals at **68%**. It is interesting that this has fallen from 71% last year and 75% the year before, which may indicate how learning and development is changing.
- **eLearning (60%)** is slightly more popular than last year (59%), **as are webinars (60% compared to 56% in 2018)**.
- **Informal peer-to-peer support** has remained at **56%** since last year.
- **56%** are interested in **having a mentor**, up from 53% in 2018.
- **18%** want **further support from their manager**, a 2% increase on 2018.



# 02

## What charities want from their leaders



# WHAT DIGITAL SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM DEVELOP?

Charities still want more from their leaders in digital, with 64% wishing they would offer a good digital strategy. However, their digital demands of their leadership teams in other areas have fallen, suggesting that things have either improved, or that charities have lower expectations.

- Charities are looking for digital leadership. **73%** want their senior team to **offer a clear vision of digital** and what it could help them to achieve, down from 77% last year but clearly still an area of significant need.
- **64%** want their leaders to **develop a good digital strategy**, rising from 60% last year.
- **57%** want their leaders to **understand trends and how they affect charities**, down from 63% last year. Meanwhile **45%** want their senior team to **have some experience or understanding of digital tools**, down from 53% last year.
- **41%** want their leadership teams to be **more agile and adapt to change**, compared to 47% last year.
- **39%** are looking for **better digital leadership skills such as being more decisive, focused and collaborative**, down from 42% last year.

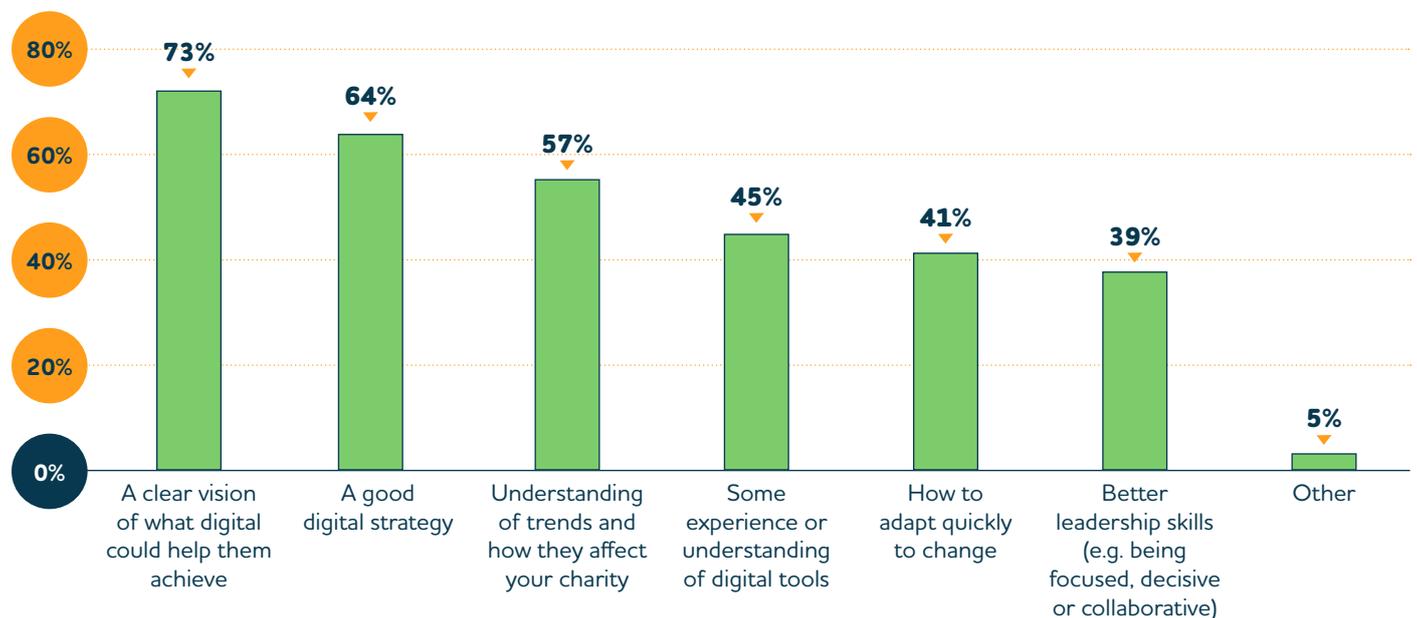
## Comments

*“The Board are refusing to spend money on digital or have a digital trustee – so until that changes it’s difficult to upskill the SMT.”*

*“Our senior management team are incredibly underskilled in digital, and most don’t even know it.”*

*“Better understanding on the importance of data and how to use it.”*

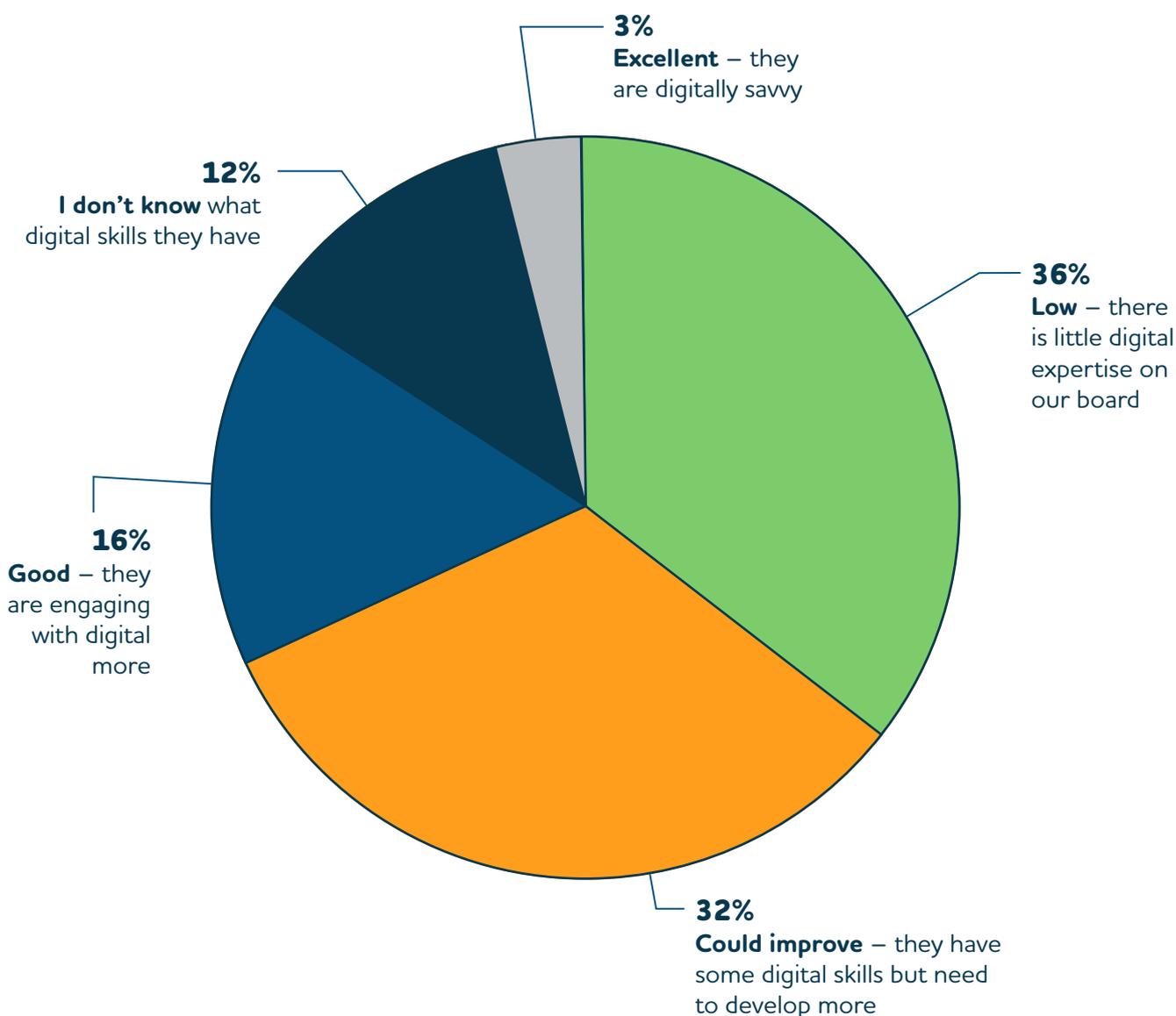
*“Understanding the value of technology not just the cost.”*



# HOW WOULD YOU RATE YOUR BOARD'S DIGITAL SKILLS?

Most charities (68%) rate their board's digital skills as low or having room for improvement, similar to 2018, whilst there has been a 3% decline in digitally savvy boards. Charities must invest in developing trustees' digital skills.

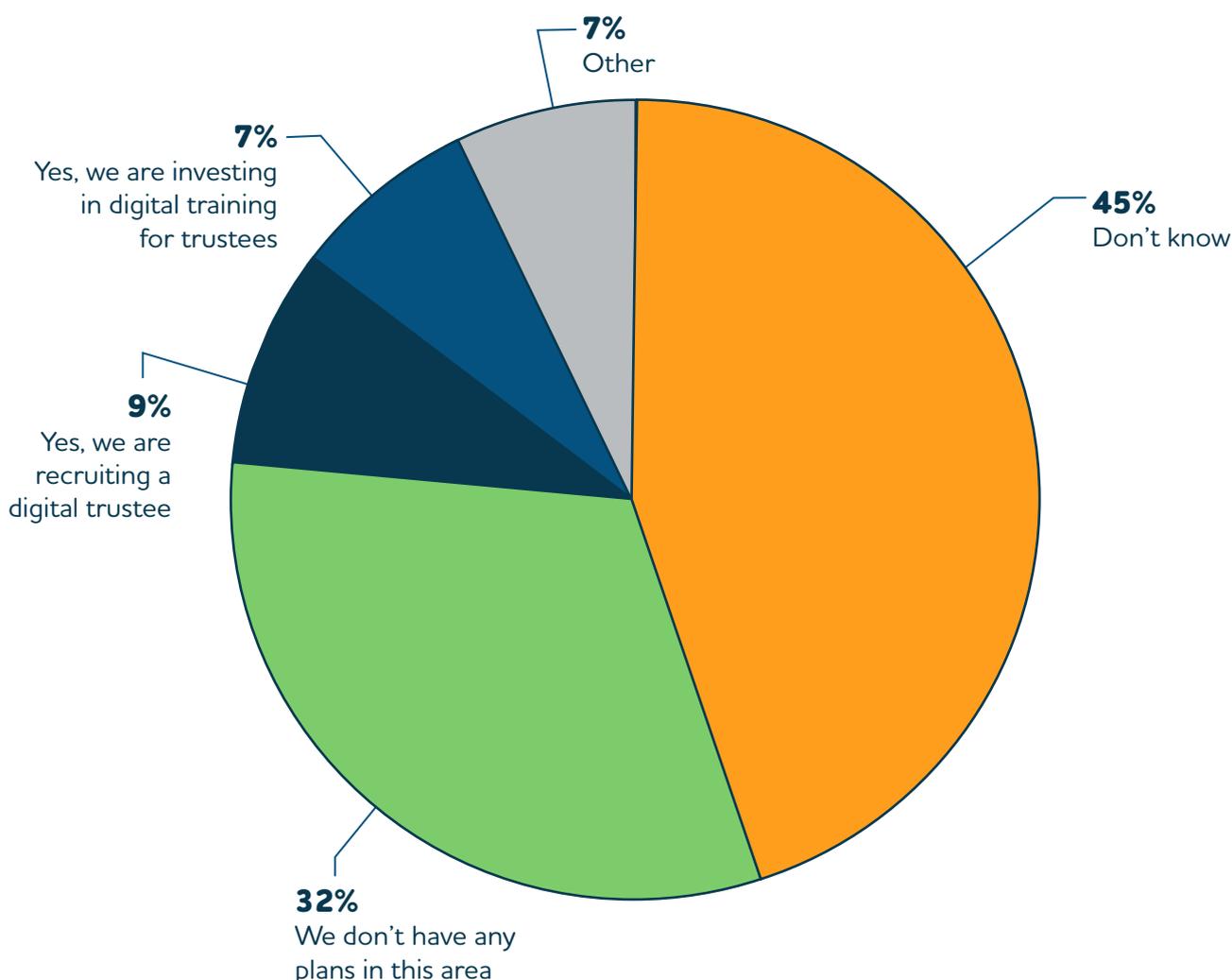
- 36% state that there is **little digital expertise on their board**, up from 34% last year and 35% in 2017.
- 32% think that their **board could improve**, possessing some digital skills but could develop more, compared to 35% last year.
- 16% say that their **board is good and engaging more with digital**, up from 14% in 2018. However, only 3% of charities see their **board as digitally savvy**, half the number of those last year (6%).



# IS YOUR CHARITY PLANNING TO INCREASE DIGITAL SKILLS ON ITS BOARD?

There is clearly a substantial digital skills gap on boards, yet **77%** of people either don't know what is being done to improve this or believe that their charity doesn't have any plans.

- Whilst there is obviously a substantial digital skills gap on most charity boards, **just under half (45%) don't know what their charity is planning** to do about this, compared to 48% last year. This indicates that the sector still hasn't seen a significant shift in upskilling boards in digital
- This is reinforced by the fact that **32% of charities do not have any plans in this area**, up from 30% in 2018.
- A mere **7% are investing in digital training for trustees**, down from 11% last year.
- However, **9% of charities are looking to recruit a digital trustee**, up from 4% in 2018.



# WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IF YOUR BOARD OR LEADERSHIP TEAM DOESN'T INCREASE ITS SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE WITH DIGITAL?

Charities are still concerned that they are missing out on opportunities in digital fundraising, and that they won't reap the rewards of using digital strategically, losing competitive advantage.

- **60%** of charities are **concerned that they will miss out on opportunities for digital fundraising**, compared to 65% last year.
- **52%** are **worried that their charities will only use digital tactically, not strategically**, down from 55% in 2018.
- **Over half (51%)** are **worried that it will give their competitors an advantage**, compared to 53% in 2018 and 2017.
- **50%** are **concerned that they won't be able to reach their audience**, similar to 51% last year.
- **49%** think they **won't be seen as relevant anymore** (compared to 48% last year).
- **49%** are concerned that they **won't be able to adapt governance to modern ways of working and the faster pace of change required by digital**, compared to 48% last year.
- **48%** feel that they **won't be able to get the support they need to develop more digital products and services**, down from 51% in 2018.
- **47%** believe **it could affect their brand and reputation**, dropping from 51% last year.
- As in 2018, **7%** think that **digital skills amongst their board and leadership team won't make a difference**.

## Comments

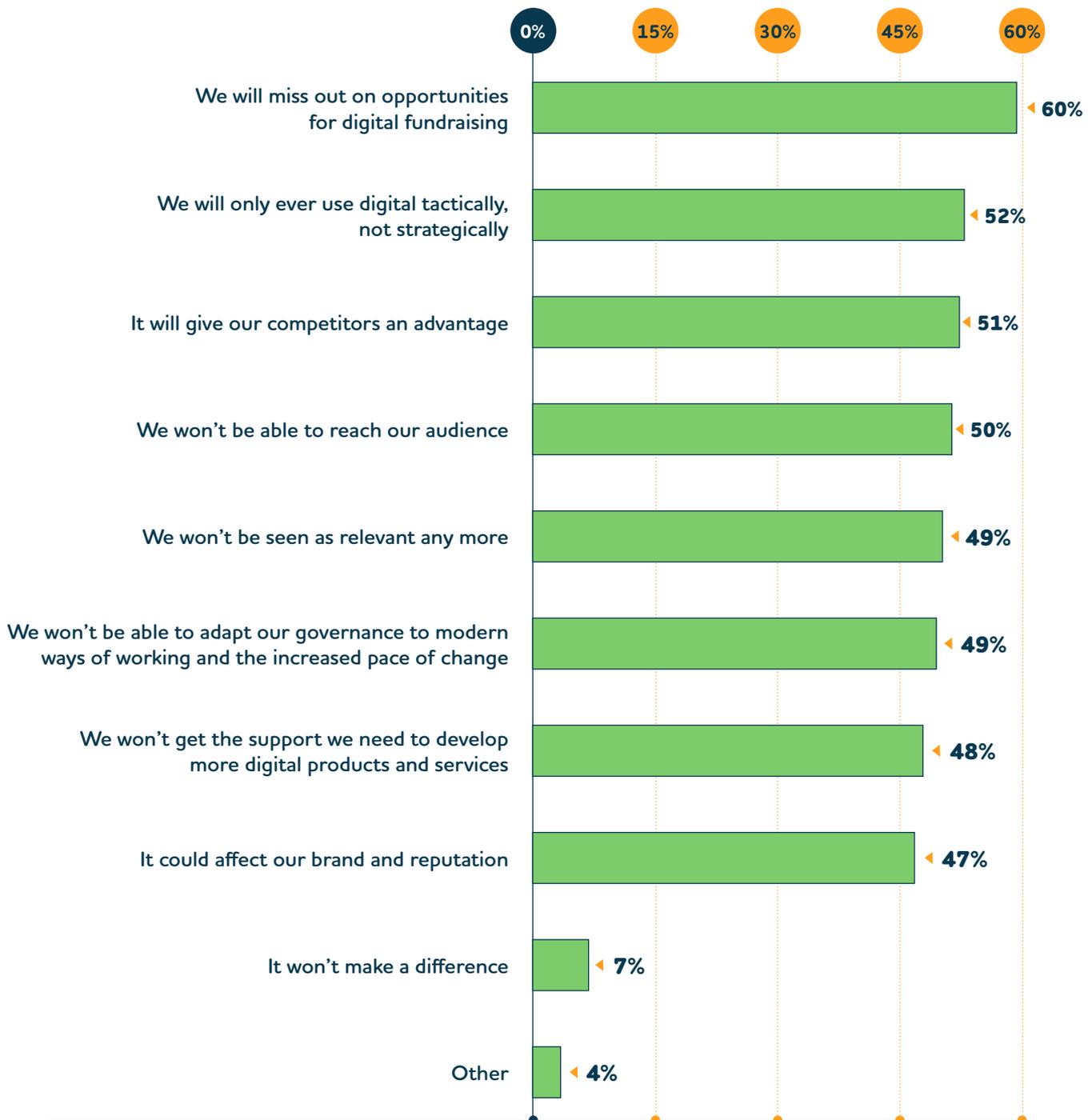
*"It may affect our ability to deliver high quality care."*

*"We'll lose digital staff who get frustrated with the lack of understanding and support – it's already happening."*

*"Digital will continue to be seen as a marketing channel and will be considered too late in our strategy development to make a real difference."*

*"Strategically behind the state of play in the sector."*

# WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL HAPPEN IF YOUR BOARD OR LEADERSHIP TEAM DOESN'T INCREASE ITS SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE WITH DIGITAL?



# 03

## Where do charities go from here?



# WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST THREATS TO YOUR CHARITY INCREASING ITS USE OF DIGITAL?

Almost two thirds of charities see lack of resources as the greatest challenge to progress.

- **Almost two thirds** see **lack of resources as the most significant threat**, up from 64% in 2018 to **65%** this year.
- More charities told us that their **IT infrastructure needs improvement**, rising from 50% last year to **54%** this year.
- The number of charities who think that their charity **isn't agile enough and that their culture needs to change** has fallen to **less than half**, from 52% to **45%** this year.
- **31%** think **keeping pace with how their audience is using digital is a challenge**, 2% less than in 2018.
- **29%** fear that **competitors are using digital better than they are**, slightly less than 28% last year.
- **27%** are **struggling to attract or retain the right digital talent**, rising from 26% in 2018 and 25% in 2017.
- **47%** are concerned that they **don't have the right skills in their charity**, similar to 48% last year.
- Yet only **17%** feel that their **market is changing rapidly**, 8% less than in 2018.
- **15%** stated that they **need to do more on cybersecurity**, which is a 5% improvement on last year.



## Comments

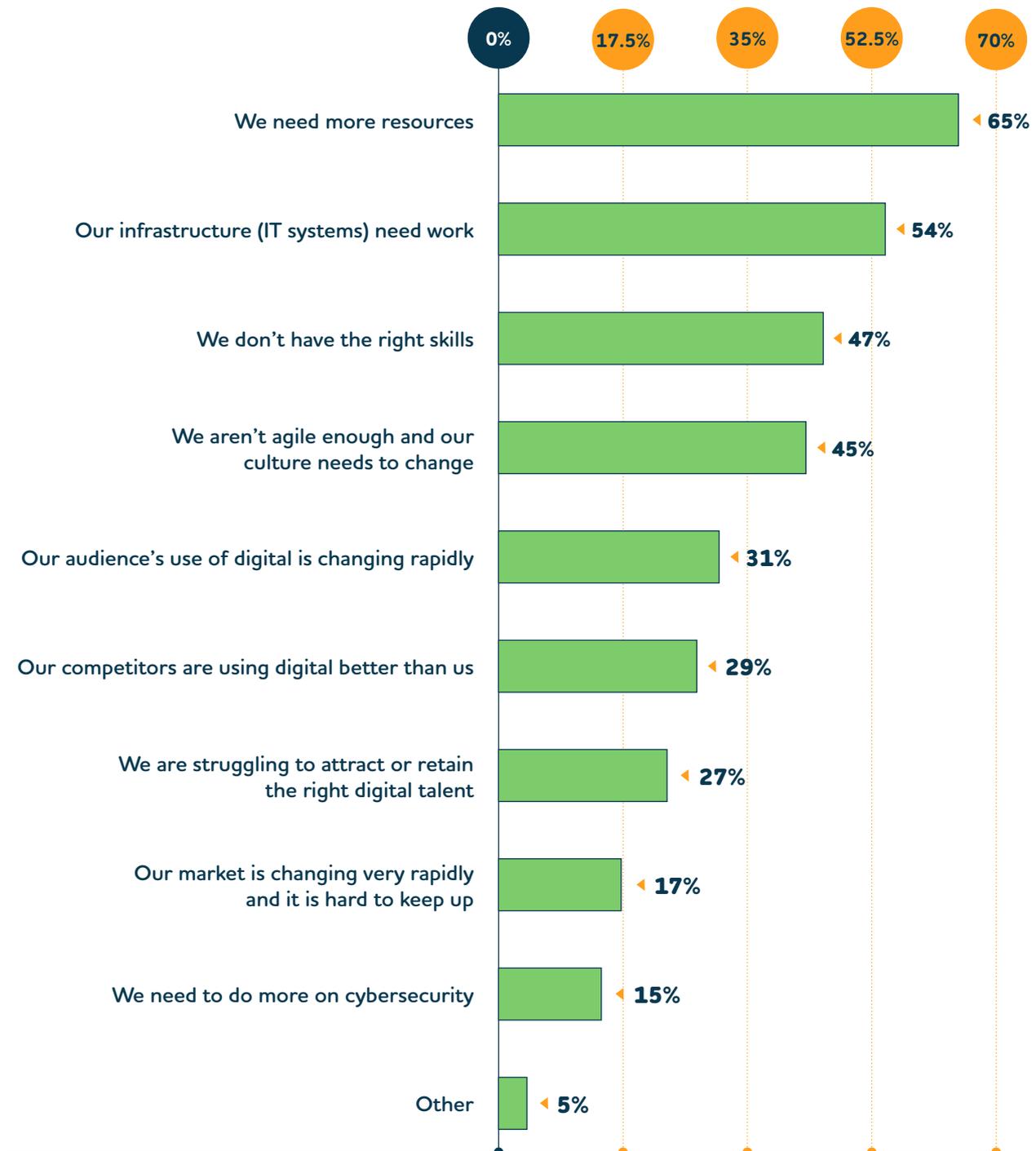
*“Our governance is old fashioned and not adaptive.”*

*“Culture and ways of working are the biggest threat – we need to develop the capabilities to manage complex projects, get better at decision making and prioritisation, and develop the capabilities to quickly pilot and prototype.”*

*“Funding isn't available to make tech investment.”*

*“Talented colleagues may get or feel left behind.”*

# WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE BIGGEST THREATS TO YOUR CHARITY INCREASING ITS USE OF DIGITAL?



# IS YOUR CHARITY PLANNING FOR EMERGING TECH DEVELOPMENTS (E.G. AUTOMATION, ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)?

How are charities managing new tech innovation? More than half (53%) of charities are aware of these issues but aren't planning for them yet. Just 12% are planning for how this could change their charity, despite frequent news stories about algorithms, cryptocurrency and artificial intelligence.

- There is a **growing awareness of these issues**, with **53%** of charities (2% more than last year) **cognisant of issues but not planning for them yet**.
- Less charities (**26%**) think that **these issues aren't relevant to them**, compared to 29% last year.
- **12%** are **planning for how this could change their charity**, less than the 14% last year.

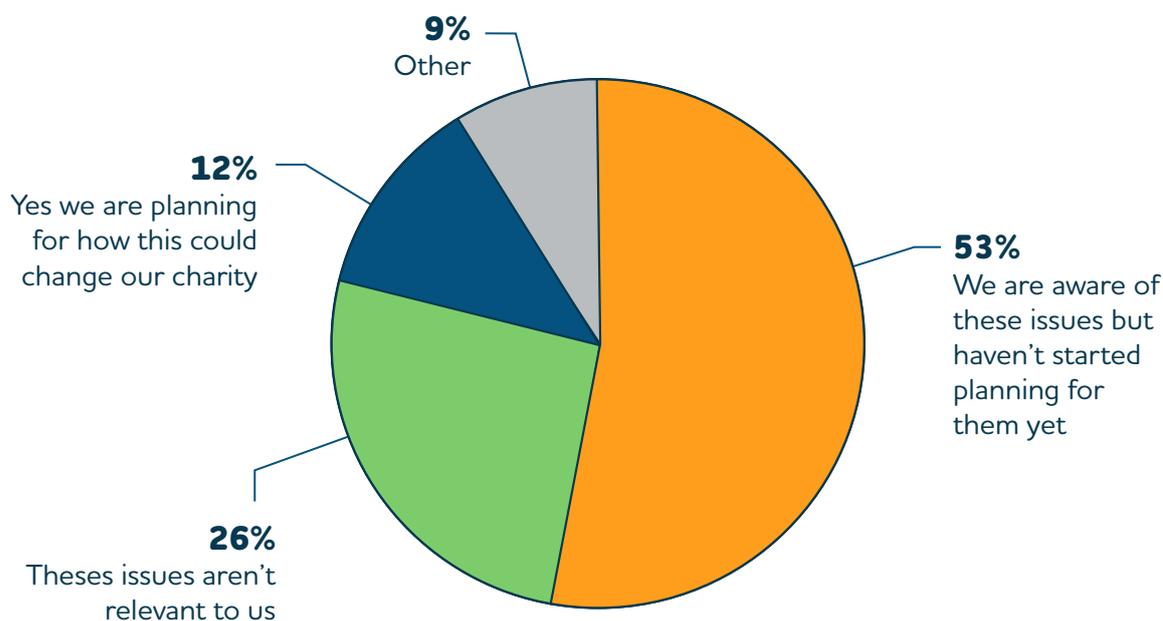
## Comments

*"We are not even thinking about it as we're ten years behind the trends."*

*"Some aspects we're leading the way (e.g. use of voice tech and other emerging technology), others we haven't considered (e.g. machine learning, automation). There is no formal plan in place for this."*

*"We have already teamed up with an AI organisation to analyse health data to find a cure/new treatments faster."*

*"We are trying to introduce as much automation as possible but the allocation of staff resources is preventing fast progress."*



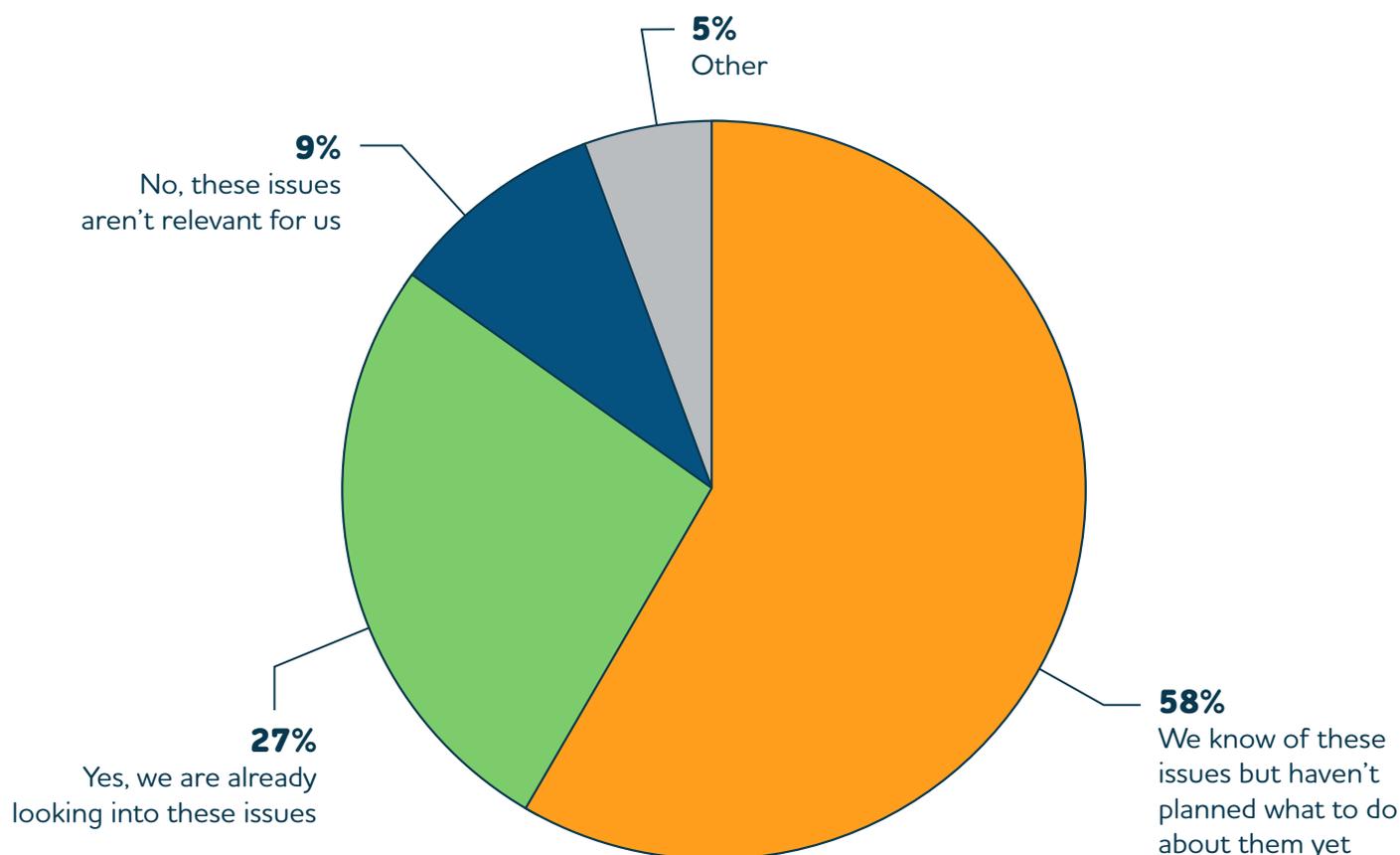
# IS YOUR CHARITY LOOKING AT THE ETHICAL CHALLENGES POSED BY DIGITAL INNOVATION, E.G. SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS' USE OF DATA, HOW TO MAKE ALL USERS FEEL INCLUDED, ALGORITHM BIAS?

With the ethics of big tech companies high on the news agenda, for the first time we asked charities how they are planning for this. Just over 1 in 4 (27%) are already looking at this challenge.

- Over half (58%) told us that they know of the issues but aren't planning for them as yet.
- More than 1 in 4 (27%) are already looking at this challenge.
- Just 9% think these issues aren't relevant to them.

## One charity professional told us

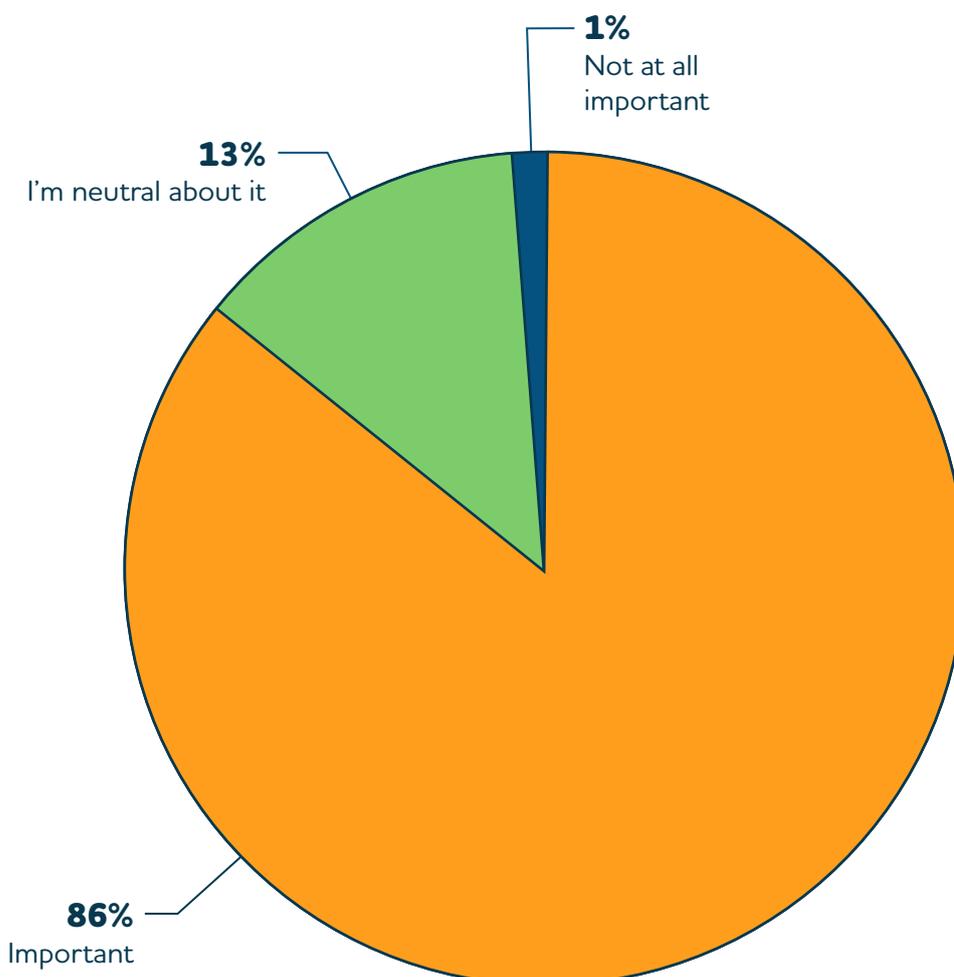
*"I know of these issues but they need wider discussion with colleagues."*



# HOW IMPORTANT IS IT TO YOU TO WORK FOR A CHARITY THAT IS ACTIVELY DEVELOPING ITS DIGITAL CAPABILITIES AND SKILLS?

More than 8 out of 10 charity professionals told us it's important to them to work for an organisation that is investing in digital skills.

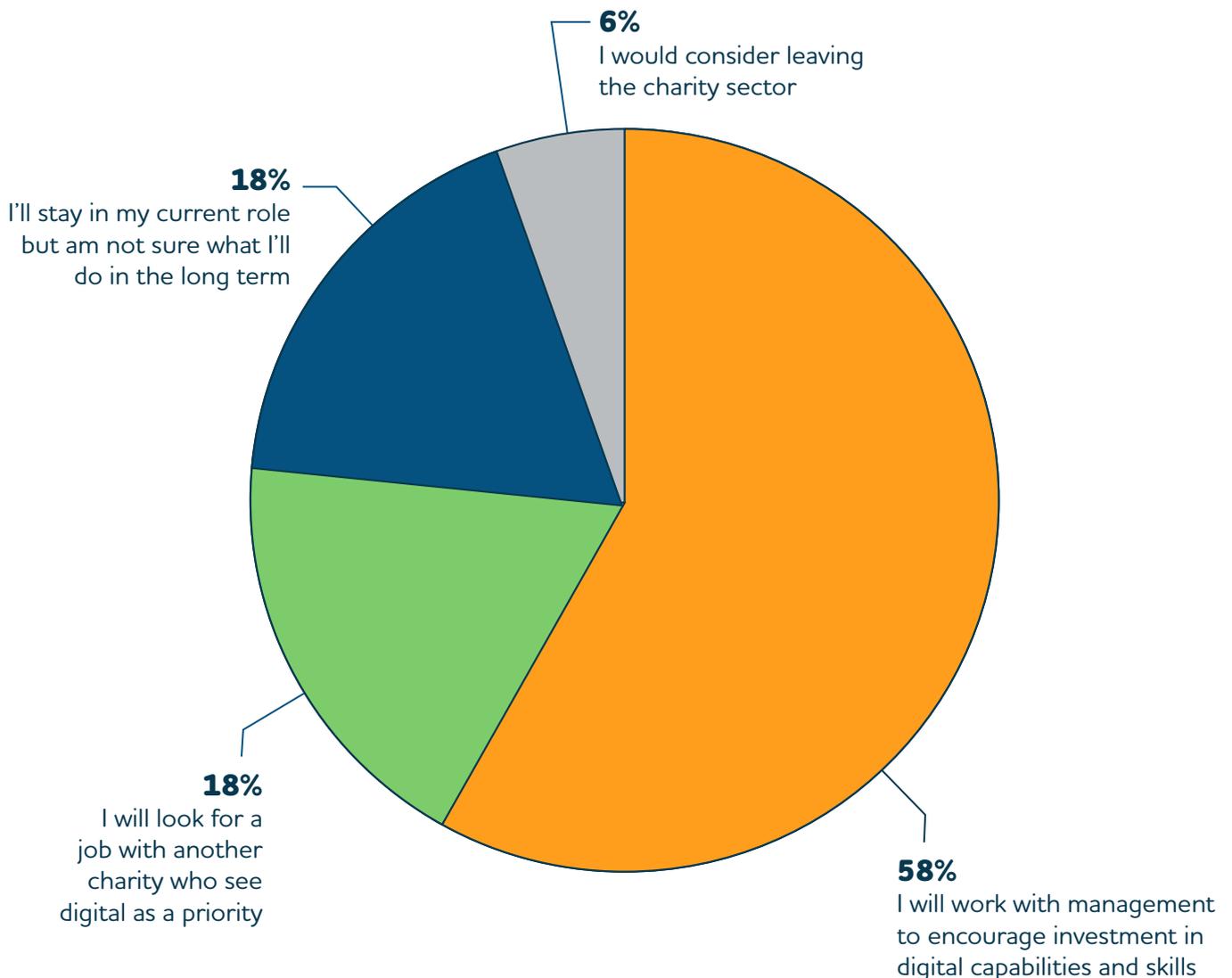
- **86%** of people want to **work for a charity that is progressing in this area**, up by 2% on last year.
- Just **13%** were **neutral about this**, down from 15% in 2018.
- A mere **1%** said it **wasn't important**.



# IF YOUR CHARITY DOESN'T INCREASE ITS USE OF DIGITAL WHAT WILL YOU DO?

A growing number of charity professionals (58%) plan to work with management to increase investment in digital, up 4% from 2018.

- **58% plan to work with management** to increase investment in digital, up 4% from 2018.
- **18% will stay in their current role** but are **unsure of what they will do in the long term**, 3% less than last year.
- As in 2018, **18% will look for a job with another charity who see digital as a priority**, up 3% on last year.
- **6%** are **considering leaving the charity sector altogether**, consistent with our 2018 report.



# IS YOUR CHARITY TAKING ACTIVE STEPS TO MAKE ITS DIGITAL TEAMS AND ROLES MORE DIVERSE?

Diversity is a hot topic and we asked charities for the first time whether they are making this a focus on digital teams. Just 25% see it as a priority. Is this enough?

- **41%** are **not currently taking active steps towards diversity** but are aware that they need to make improvements.
- However, **1 in 4 (25%)** don't know what their charity is doing about this issue.
- Just **25%** see it as a priority.

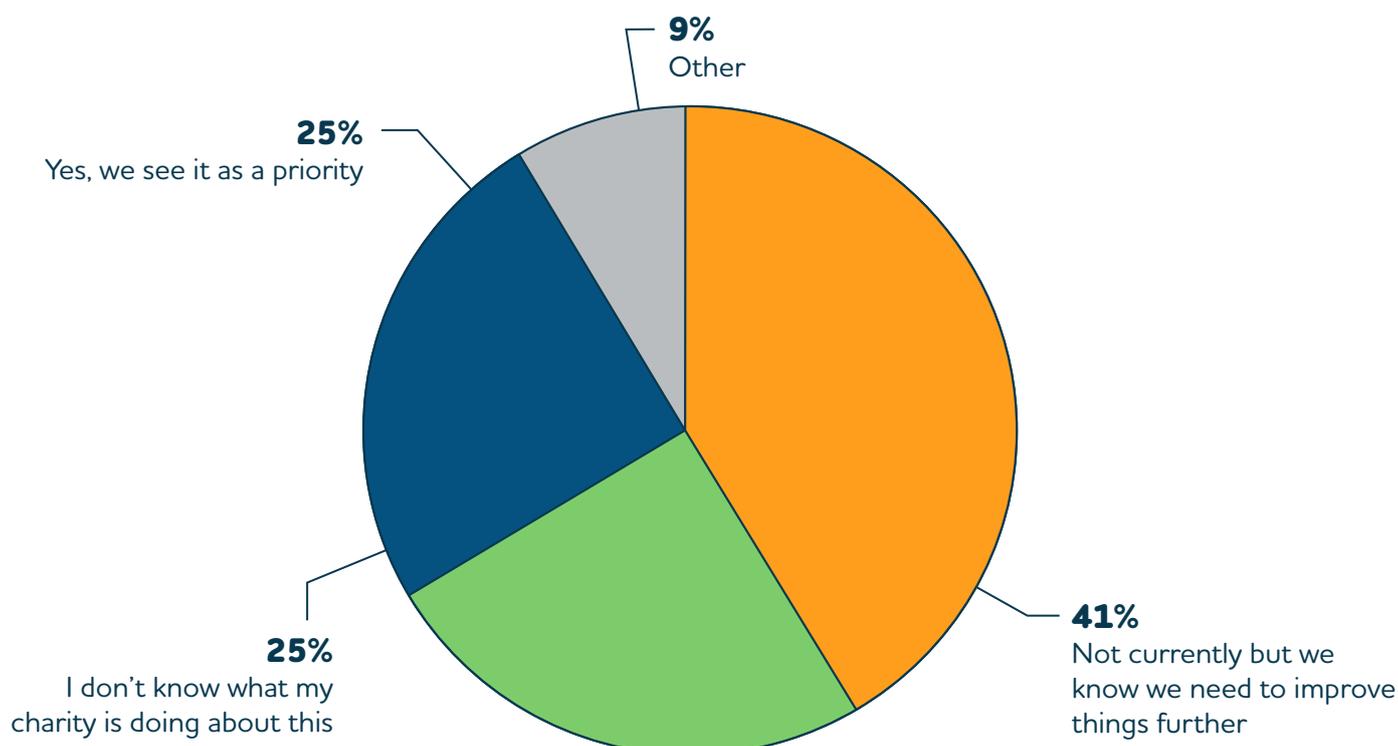
## Comments

*"We are too small to worry about it."*

*"It is a priority but we are doing it well – the digital and development teams are diverse."*

*"Not even on the radar of our senior management, very disappointing."*

*"I'm leading on this but I have to convince trustees and get a sustainability plan."*



# IS BREXIT AFFECTING YOUR CHARITY'S DIGITAL PLANS?

Brexit is one of the biggest events facing the UK in 2019. In this year's report, we asked charities how it's affecting them. **87%** of charities say it hasn't affected what they are doing digitally.

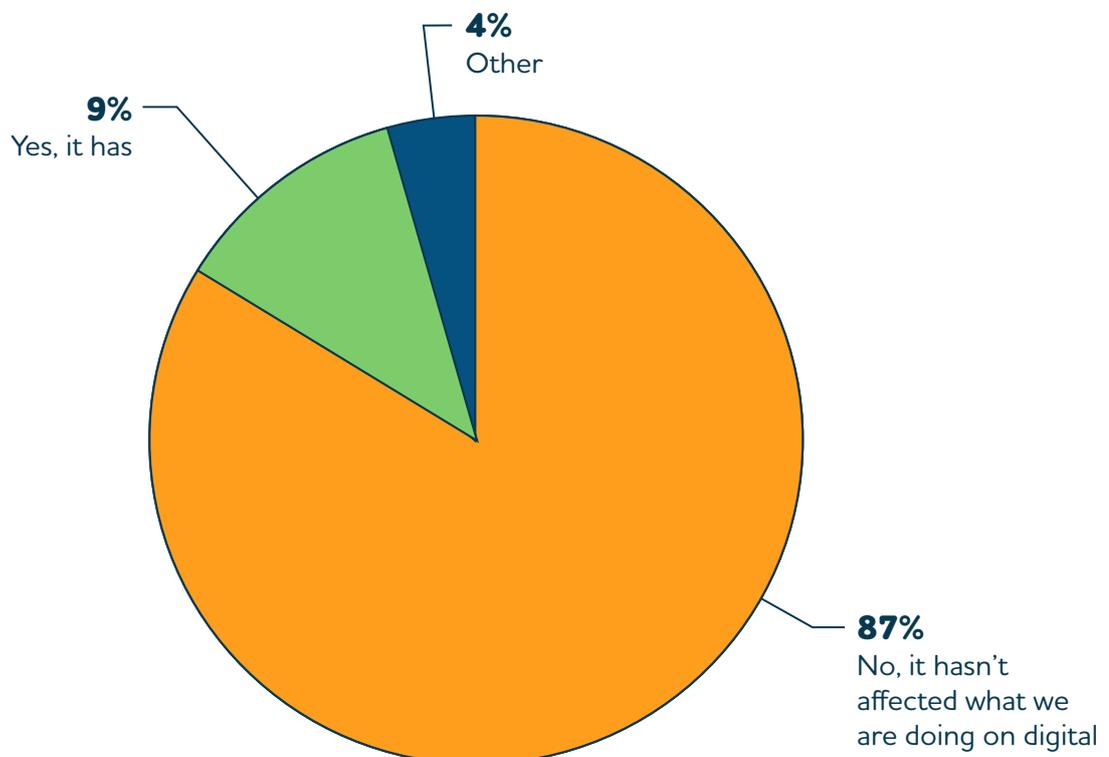
- **87%** of charities say it **hasn't affected what they are doing digitally.**
- **9%** say it **has changed what they do.**

## Charities commented:

*"It's a watching brief, based on whether there is diverging legislation we need to adhere to as it comes up. Especially around GDPR."*

*"Everything is in limbo, which makes financial planning tricky!!"*

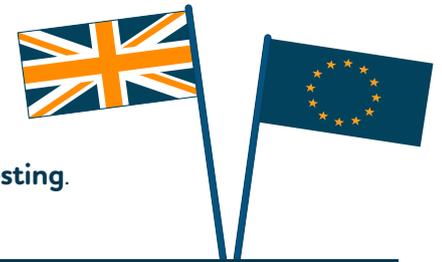
*"Three of our team are French, it may do."*



# IF BREXIT IS AFFECTING YOUR CHARITY'S DIGITAL PLANS, WHAT IS THE IMPACT?

42% are finding it hard to plan due to uncertainty, whilst 14% are concerned about access to data and 12% are cautious about investing.

- 42% are finding it hard to plan due to uncertainty.
- 40% are focusing on business as usual, with innovation less of a priority.
- 14% are concerned about access to data, whilst 12% are cautious about investing.

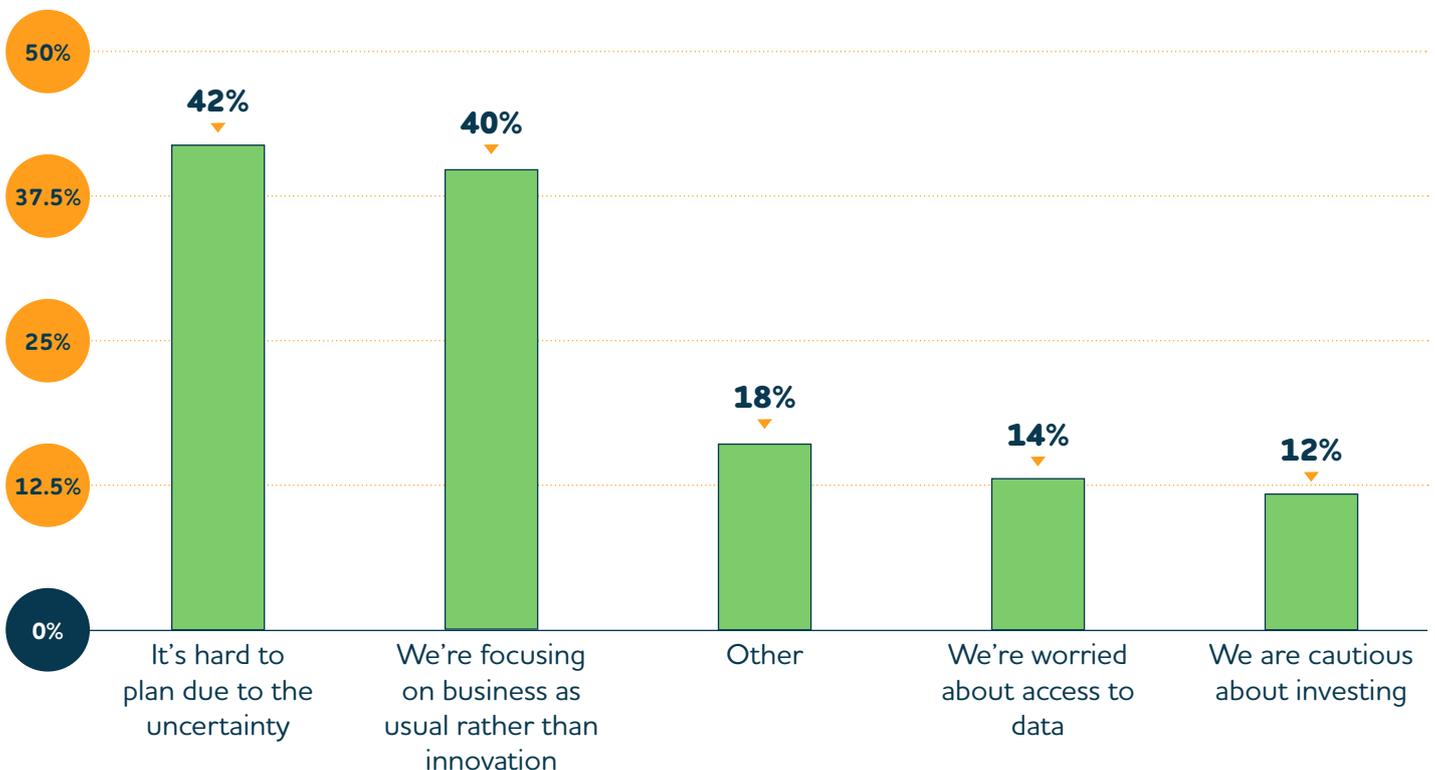


## Comments:

*“Just planning for a no deal and how that would affect supplier relationships with GDPR, e.g. Facebook.”*

*“Having to adapt how we use digital for Europe related activity and whether we include the UK in some digital related work/campaigns.”*

*“Unaware of Brexit planning and impacts as assessed by senior management.”*



## IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO TELL US ABOUT HOW DIGITAL SKILLS COULD HELP YOUR CHARITY?

*“As a small charity we have many competing priorities – funding, partnerships, operational activities, etc., so digital progress needs to work within these. We are engaged in Blockchain development via a peer group, however.”*

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*“It could help if trustees and staff thought it was worth any proper time and energy.”*

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*“Yes, which funders fund digital skills for the charity sector, so we can start?”*

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*“We have produced a set of IT standards. Having undertaken a survey against those standards, and aware of the gaps, we are working on how staff demonstrate them. Funding may assist with the training solution for some of the standards – yet to be determined. An IT Buddy is in place at each of our services and our next internal IT Buddy network meeting will be in June 2019.”*

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*“Our issue is more with how our beneficiaries use digital, rather than how we use digital. It is often challenging for us to make something intuitive and accessible to people with no experience using technology when our management are all very capable with technology. We may even benefit from having more input from someone who has less digital skills to ensure our customers are capable of using our platforms.”*

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*“Lack of funding for all services means it's more difficult to change our internal culture to support digital transformation. It's understandably difficult for staff delivering front line services to accept investment digitally when statutory and non-statutory funding for their work supporting people is continuing to reduce. It can feel to some as though we're investing in something less important and, despite upskilling staff to understand the impact digital transformation can have for long term sustainability and increasing revenues, there is still a lot of hesitancy in believing it. This may be partly due to our work force largely not being tech natives, however it continues to be a challenge.”*

## IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU'D LIKE TO TELL US ABOUT HOW DIGITAL SKILLS COULD HELP YOUR CHARITY?

*“As a national charity working with stigmatised people, digital is vital for us to reach our beneficiaries and for them to maintain their anonymity. With little digital funding we have struggled to progress and upskill staff who have expertise in other areas. Digitally skilled staff are now our priority to develop and mentor existing staff.”*

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*“What we are lacking is not necessarily the skills but really the ability to take time to apply them. As we are very small, it is not currently prioritised enough.”*

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*“Helping the wider organisation think more strategically in general.”*

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*“There is no reason for charities not to train all staff on digital skills, including how to understand digital culture. As more people contact our helpline, they want to have conversations on the channels that they use. Our frontline staff need to be able to make sense and feel comfortable in these spaces.”*

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*“The need to improve digital and technology understanding in the people with the bag of cash is a priority – procurement and financial controls are the biggest barrier to pace and there is zero trust in investing in technology.”*

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*“We believe that the voluntary sector is ageing and it is essential to understand and develop young people's desire to participate and make a difference if this sector is to survive.”*

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*“Generally, I want us to be seen as an effective and efficient organisation, delivering quality services. Part of this is using all systems and digital effectively and professionally.”*

# CALL TO ACTION



BY ZOE AMAR  
Founder of Zoe Amar Digital

## 1 Funders need to step up

This is the third year we've run the report, and the second consecutive year that charities have told us funding is the biggest barrier to them getting more from digital. There is a growing need for digital across the sector; 52% of charities do not have a digital strategy, the highest number since the report began in 2017. Funders need to do more to support charities' digital ambitions, otherwise their grantees' impact could suffer.

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## 2 We need digital, not analogue, leaders

The overwhelming majority of charities want their leaders to offer a clear vision of what digital could help their charity achieve. Leadership teams and their staff need to work together to develop what this could look like. We need to invest in supporting leaders in developing their digital skills, and to consider how this affects recruitment, and how we assess performance and retain talent.

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## 3 Boards need to raise their game

With a decline in the number of digitally savvy boards, and less charities investing in digital training for trustees, how can boards make informed decisions? As a first step, **Reach Volunteering** can help charities recruit digital trustees.

Charities who really get digital often live by the mantra 'a digital organisation is a learning organisation' and it's time we had similar expectations of boards, encouraging them to learn new skills and use their strategy and business experience to provide positive challenge to how staff are using digital. Offering to brief your board about the latest digital trends affecting your charities' work could pique their curiosity.

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## 4 Charities should build on their digital ambitions

Despite these challenges, charities are hungry to use digital to increase their impact, deliver services and get more from their data. Many see the potential to save money and time. CAST have an excellent set of **service design principles** for charities. If you'd like to get more from your data take a look at **Datakind UK**.

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## 5 Keep putting user needs first

More than half of the charities who took part are responding to changing user needs and behaviours. If you feel that your charity could do more in this area, start with the data you already have, such as how users are interacting with you on your social media platforms and your website, and who is using your services, and how often.

## CALL TO ACTION

### 6 Our digital teams need to be more diverse

There is awareness of the need to have a range of perspectives and experiences on digital teams, but just 25% see it as a priority. Ask yourself whether the job descriptions you have are truly inclusive, check if you're always using the same channels to find candidates and test out draft adverts on contacts from a range of different backgrounds and listen to their feedback.

### 7 We need to talk about digital ethics

More than half of the charities we spoke to are aware that ethics is an issue but aren't planning for it as yet. Whether it's the values of suppliers and partners, what big tech companies are doing with your data or whether you're reaching the digitally excluded, start a conversation with your team and look at how you can identify and manage risks.

#### ABOUT ZOE AMAR

Zoe Amar is widely regarded as one of the charity sector's leading digital experts. She founded digital agency and social enterprise *Zoe Amar Digital* in 2013. Their clients have included NSPCC, Anglia Ruskin University and The School for Social Entrepreneurs.

Zoe is Chair of The Charity Digital Code of Practice. She writes for Third Sector about charities and digital issues and co-founded the *Social CEOs awards*. She also co-authored The Charity Commission's digital guidance for trustees, 'Making Digital Work.'

Zoe has ten years' experience as a charity trustee. She currently sits on the board of Tech Trust. She also sits on the Board Audit and Risk Sub-Committee at the Samaritans as their digital expert. Previously, Zoe worked for 5 years as part of the leadership team at a national charity which advised non-profits about technology. She recently won an Inspiring Communicator award from CharityComms.



[www.zoeamar.com](http://www.zoeamar.com)

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